



## Beyond Bollywood: A Critical Exploration of Mental Health Awareness in 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore'

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### Abstract

A change in perspective is underway in Bollywood as exemplified by films like "Dear Zindagi" (2016) and "Chhichhore" (2019), transcending conventional entertainment. These movies dig into the human mind's complexities, serving as catalysts for change by fostering awareness about mental health in Indian society. While exploring this study cinematic pieces mark a notable evolution in Bollywood's role, moving beyond entertainment to become positive change agents in our cultural dialogue on mental well-being.

Directed by Gauri Shinde, "Dear Zindagi" features Alia Bhatt and Shah Rukh Khan in lead roles, portraying a young woman navigating life's challenges and seeking therapy for inner struggles. The research qualitatively examines the film's nuanced depiction of mental health issues, therapy, and societal perspectives, contributing to the ongoing discourse on mental well-being. On the flip side, Nitesh Tiwari's comedy "Chhichhore," starring Sushant Singh Rajput and Shraddha Kapoor, humorously explores college students grappling with academic pressures. The study explores how mainstream cinema, through its portrayal of academic stress and its impact on mental health, engages and shapes perspectives on well-being in educational settings. This research underscores the significance of these cinematic narratives as powerful tools for instigating positive changes in societal attitudes toward mental health.

**Keywords-** Bollywood Films, Mental Health, Dear Zindagi, Chhichhore, Film Impact, Audience Reception, Societal Discourse.

### Introduction

On October 10th of each year, we observe World Mental Health Day. It's a day to raise public awareness about brain health issues, a proponent for further development of emotional and mental health services and backing up, and encourage mental well-being. On this day, individuals and groups participate in events and initiatives across the globe to decrease the reproach identical to mental health and encourage round tables about mental health issues.

Advocate for further developed emotional wellness administrations and backing and influence our ability to manage hardship, maintain relationships, and make informed decisions.

It is important because it plays an often-overlooked function in our general well-being. Understanding mental wellness is essential when trying to combat prejudice associated with conditions related to





psychological well-being, enhance honest communication, and help people to seek help without fear of being criticized. A greater understanding makes it possible to identify mental health issues early on, which allows immediate attention with appropriate treatment. Additionally, it guarantees simpler access to resources and support, promoting well-being in both educational and professional settings. In general, promoting awareness of mental health issues is our shared duty to do pleader and uphold mental and emotional health in society.

Beyond the traditional limits of the film itself, a clear and exaggerated shift has been taking place within the vibrant world of Bollywood. Films like "Dear Zindagi" (2016) and "Chhichhore" (2019) are reflective of this change as they break from traditional storylines to address issues of society that have a profound emotional impact on the viewer. The study of mental health, a formerly ignored theme that now takes center stage in the narrative yarn of Indian cinema, is at the forefront of this cinematic renaissance. Specifically analyzing how "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" contribute to a paradigm shift in Bollywood's role, moving beyond mere entertainment to become agents of positive change in our cultural dialogue on mental well-being, this introduction attempts to examine the layers of significance embedded in these cinematic masterpieces.

The movie "Dear Zindagi", directed by Gauri Shinde, skillfully ties together the lives of its characters, performed by, as a matter of fact, Shah Rukh Khan and Alia Bhatt. The storyline of this film effectively pulls back the curtain on the psychology of people, offering a unique glimpse into the hidden demons of a young woman struggling to figure out the sense of the complex society around her. An essential component of her path is going to therapy, which tests social standards and compels her to examine mental health issues in great detail. This study adopts a qualitative lens to assess the delicate cinematic approaches used in "Dear Zindagi," analyzing how they impact the public's view of mental health.

The research aims to portray the film as an extraordinary power in the present conversation concerning mental health in Indian society, from the sophisticated relationships between characters to the socio-cultural results.

In contrast to this, Nitesh Tiwari's "Chhichhore" tackles the stresses suffered by college students in a comical yet analytical way. A cast led by Sushant Singh Rajput and Shraddha Kapoor skillfully and compassionately handles the difficulties of academic stress. Beyond the jokes, the movie gently explores the significant effects these stresses have on mental health. Content analysis method is used in this to analyze how "Chhichhore" influences and communicates with the social concept of mental wellness, especially in the light of academic boundaries.

To know more about the film and its potential impact on interactions and perspectives regarding mental health, particularly in educational settings, the study will examine narrative structures, character development, and visual representations.

With content analysis as its foundation, this comparative study attempts the voices of "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" in the popular discourse on mental health. The research examines audience reactions, particularly among younger audiences, by analyzing the films' story elements, character dynamics, and visual portrayals. The study highlights the importance of all parts that film plays in encouraging empathy, eliminating stigma, and increasing public understanding in conversations about mental health by exploring the complicated stories of these cinematic classics and portraying them as transforming influencers on public perceptions.

## Literature Review

A literature review aims to bring out the key elements of current knowledge, including both substantive and theoretical results as well as methodological and theoretical contributions to a certain subject. Most





of it originates from less important sources. The previously identified data has been discussed and checked thoroughly. The main objective is to set up oneself with the latest research on a subject; this serves as the foundation for any further studies that may be required.

The discussion of psychological well-being is becoming increasingly important in today's culture, requiring thoughtful and caring conversation across a variety of media. This examination of the literature explores how mental health is portrayed in movies, particularly in the works of "Dear Zindagi" (2016) and "Chhichhore" (2019), and the way this impacts stigma reduction and public awareness. It also looks at how mental health appears more broadly in Indian newspapers and movies, as well as how the media shapes public opinion.

How "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" address mental health issues grabbed attention. Both of these movies, which were directed by **Nitesh Tiwari and Gauri Shinde**, respectively, offer distinctive stories that explore the lives of their protagonists and their concerns with emotional well-being issues. They show some attention to the subtleties of the human psyche and stress the importance of asking for assistance and support. It is important to examine these movies critically to assess how they help spread awareness and lessen the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Researchers **Corrigan, Druss, and Perlick (2014)** have looked at the significant effects that spots associated with mental issues have on those who seek and use services related to mental wellness. Stigma, which has many different forms, is a major obstacle to receiving therapy. The article addresses ways to combat stigma, such as family engagement initiatives, mental health literacy initiatives, programs for psychologists, and cultural awareness. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to amend laws to eliminate systemic stigma and increase accessibility to mental health assistance. The study indicates how important it is to perform more research on this subject. Concerns are raised by **Chandramouleeshwaran, Edwin, and Rajaleelan (2016)** over the inaccurate portrayal of mental diseases in popular Indian movies. The way that mental health is portrayed in movies has the power either to reinforce established beliefs and prejudices or promote a more truthful and compassionate understanding. An major unit of the review is how much the two films either endorse or dispute these issues.

**Rüsch, Angermeyer, and Corrigan's (2005)** paper analyzes the frequency of discrimination in the public as well as who suffers from mental issues. It gives a conceptual summary of the spots related to mental illness and emphasizes the effects it has on individuals who are affected. The main obstacles to obtaining mental health services discussed in the research are self-stigma and spot-related anxiety. It also covers the three main methods for reducing stigma: contact, education, and protest. Resources for mental health include infrastructure, money, services, human resources, community resources, and policy, as **Saxena et al. (2007)** point out. These resources are typically insufficient in low- and middle-income nations because of a lacklustre focus on institution-based care, insufficient government spending, and a shortage of human resources. Access is further limited by unequal distribution and stigma, and the shortcomings of improving mental health, especially in developing countries, are made worse by inconsistencies in financing and resource allocation. A study conducted by **Raj et al. (2021)** examined how Indian newspapers portrayed mental illness in 273 news stories—164 in Hindi and 109 in English. Stigmatizing language and images were frequently used, and Hindi media typically produced higher-quality reporting than English media. Comparing both local and national media stories, it was discovered that the former were less disparaging and stigmatizing. In the words of **Stallman (2010)**, going to college can be extremely stressful due to factors, including environmental changes, pressure to perform well academically, and shifting social support networks. A personality trait linked to improved mental health is resilience, which lessens the negative effects of stress. According to the





study, university students who exhibited stronger resilience also reported feeling more connected to their school, receiving more perceived social support, and enduring less psychological distress. These results point to the significance of resilience-based interventions to better college students' mental health.

**Jenkins (2012) and Hall, Hobson, Lowe, and Willis (1980)** talk about how the media affects culture and society. To comprehend these movies' influence on mental health awareness, it is essential to know how they connect with and possibly contradict current media narratives about mental health. The study carried out by **Kalra, Bhugra, and Ventriglio (2018)** looks at suicide scenes in Bollywood movies that have such scenes. They compiled a list of these films and examined them for scientific accuracy, character attributes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. The findings indicate that the majority of the characters were middle-aged, educated, working, and motivated mostly by emotional suffering and shame or guilt. The research found that suicides were frequently impulsive, included jumping from heights, and ended in death. It also found that Bollywood films' cinematic portrayals of suicide can mislead audiences, underscoring the importance of being in line with the latest research.

Something relevant to the discussion of mental health awareness is the scrutiny of how body image and self-esteem are shown in the broadcast by **Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick (2014)**. Analyzing how the two movies tackle problems of confidence and body image and how they connect to mental health might yield insightful information.

Discussions over how the movies "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" depict mental health have been triggered, which has added to the larger conversation on mental health awareness. This learning presents how these movies depict disorders of the mind, deal with stigma surrounding mental health, and affect public opinion. This study aims to promote existing efforts that use movies as a platform for promoting mental health awareness and reducing stigma by analyzing these factors.

### Objective

The research project described aims to know the blow of Indian films, especially the films "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," on cultural mentalities close to mental health. The main aim of this review was to figure out how these movies help to lessen the spot-encompassing psychological well-being issues because psychological well-being is still traditionally taboo in Indian society. To get success in this aim, a 10-question survey was carefully created to determine participants' comfort levels with discussing emotional wellness problems following their screening of the two aforementioned films, which both deal in some way with psychological or mental health issues.

A movie like "Dear Zindagi" was aimed at addressing the widespread fear of being called "mad" or "uncanny" in a society that finds it difficult to acknowledge depression as a real illness, mostly because of a lack of knowledge about the condition. Notwithstanding these flaws, 'Dear Zindagi' developed an avenue for clarifying the complexities of the human psyche and offering insight into the difficult journey of mental health.

In contrast, the objective of 'Chhichhore' was to offer a cinematic story that addresses the subject of resilience and self-worth in the people who fought with psychological wellness issues and scholastic stress. The movie sought to deliver a strong message about shedding the stigma of being labelled a "loser" by using the experiences of the character Aniruddh "Anni" Pathak and his pals. This message struck a chord with the anxiety of social rejection. The message was well conveyed in "Chhichhore" through parallel stories set in the 21st century.

The focus of the survey was to discover more about the respondents' thoughts and how much of these two films inspired their opinions and ideas about mental health. The study sought to propose basic





knowledge into how the two movies could work on the representation of mental health issues by compiling this essential knowledge. This would therefore promote greater understanding and awareness of mental health in society and help to lessen stigma.

### **Methodology**

The learning was done utilizing a closed-ended survey to find out how the general population perceived how mental health problems and psychological diseases were portrayed in Indian movies, with a special emphasis on "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore." The objective of the poll was to gather important information regarding how these movies affected society's views and perceptions about mental health.

### **Survey Approach:**

**Population Under Survey:** To ensure a large variety of perspectives, the survey was given to 100 respondents who were of all ages.

**Survey Format:** Participants could quickly access the survey because it was given using Google Forms. The reason for the review was to obtain a thorough understanding of how Indian cinema, specifically movies like "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," shapes popular attitudes toward mental health. The knowledge acquired through these answers will provide an insightful look at how well-representations of mental health in movies affect social acceptance, raise awareness, and lessen stigma. These kinds of insights could help filmmakers convey mental health concerns more sensitively and truthfully, which would help to lessen stigma and enhance awareness of emotional health problems.

A total of 100 people of all ages were included in this survey, which sought to focus on how Indian film affects public perspective toward emotional well-being and whether it might lessen stigma and raise awareness. The conclusions can help creators and learners depict mental wellness problems in their films more sensitively and truthfully, which will help achieve the larger goal of lessening stigma and encouraging viewer understanding.

The questionnaire presents clever data about how Indian cinema, as exemplified by "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," shapes popular attitudes and views of mental health. The responses received from the questionnaire's respondents will determine the final results.

A thorough knowledge of the impacts of Indian cinema on mental health awareness will be possible thanks to the anticipated results from these questions. These might highlight the movies' capacity to lessen stigma, raise awareness, and change public perceptions of mental health problems. The poll respondents' responses influence the final results, which may differ depending on their unique experiences and viewpoints.

### **Findings**

Findings from the questionnaire that was assembled to decide how society's perception of mental health has changed are shown below.

There was a total of 100 respondents to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was assisted by using Google Forms and shared with various Friends and batchmates WhatsApp groups, and also via mail and to some respondents with direct links on their phones as text messages. In this survey age, gender or class of the respondents are not considered.



1. Have you watched the Bollywood films 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore,' both of which address the title of mental-health awareness?



1. This research's startling conclusions point to a substantial improvement in public perceptions of mental health. 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore,' two Bollywood films that focus on the topic of mental health, have been watched by a staggering 91% of respondents. At the point when the following films were shown to the public and watched by the responders, they had a lasting impression. Most people who watched these films said they had a more humane and empathetic viewpoint on individuals who face problems with mental health concerns.

This change in perspective, which is reflected in Indian cinema, signifies a critical turning point toward a society that is more empathetic and kinder. The majority of respondents to the study agreed with this beneficial adjustment, which is encouraging. However, 9% of the respondents, or a tiny fraction, have not yet had the chance to see these important movies.

2. Do you understand the concept and importance of mental health?



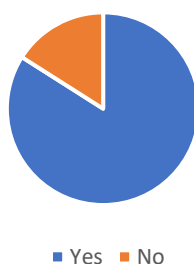
2. Findings from the questionnaire show that respondents' knowledge of mental-health is improving. 95% of the participants, or a solid majority, said they understood the concept and importance of brain issues. People recognize the importance of mental-health in preserving mental health, which encourages the promotion of candid discussions about mental wellness issues. The findings highlight the need to preserve one's mental fitness along with showing that people understand the basic concepts of mental health.

3. The findings from the questionnaire revealed an interesting story at the core of our investigation. After watching "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," an overwhelming 84% of appellants said they felt more quiet discussing emotional and mental wellness issues and getting treatment or counselling. This overwhelmingly positive reaction highlights how much the way mental health concerns are portrayed by Bollywood movies affects people's willingness to talk about these important subjects.



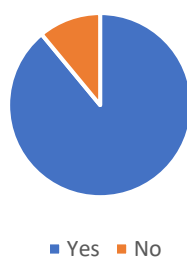
These aftermaths also imply that the people who relate to the narratives and characters shown in these movies have solid feelings of validation. People identify with these narratives as they realize themselves in them as well, and this helps lay out a more sympathetic understanding of the environment around mental wellness and health.

### 3. Have you ever sought help or counselling for mental health concerns after watching Dear Zindagi and Chhichhore?



These results highlight the critical significance that sensitive and truthful film depictions of mental health have in our culture. These representations have the potential to significantly lessen stigma and—above all—to motivate people to get the concern and assistance they need when engaging with mental wellness and health issues.

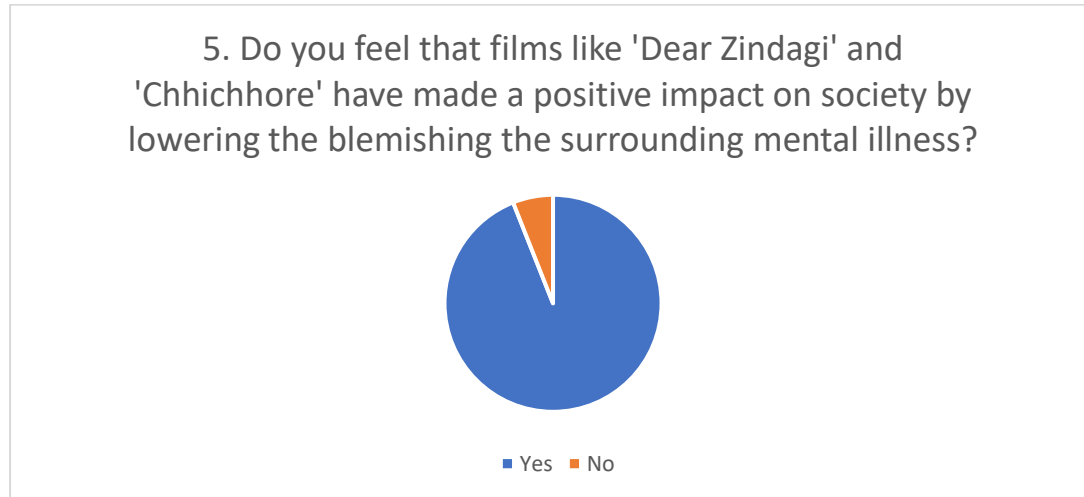
### 4. Do you believe these movies accurately portray mental health conditions?



4. Discovery of this showed that the method of mental wellness health issues depicted in the films "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" received very positive feedback. 89% of the participants, or a sizable majority, said they thought both movies depicted mental health difficulties truthfully. This overwhelming agreement demonstrates an increasing perspective of the force the media has in influencing how society views emotional health. It represents a good change in perception, as audiences increasingly anticipate films to treat mental health concerns with dignity and empathy, realizing that movies can be a formidable tool for raising awareness and enacting social transformation.

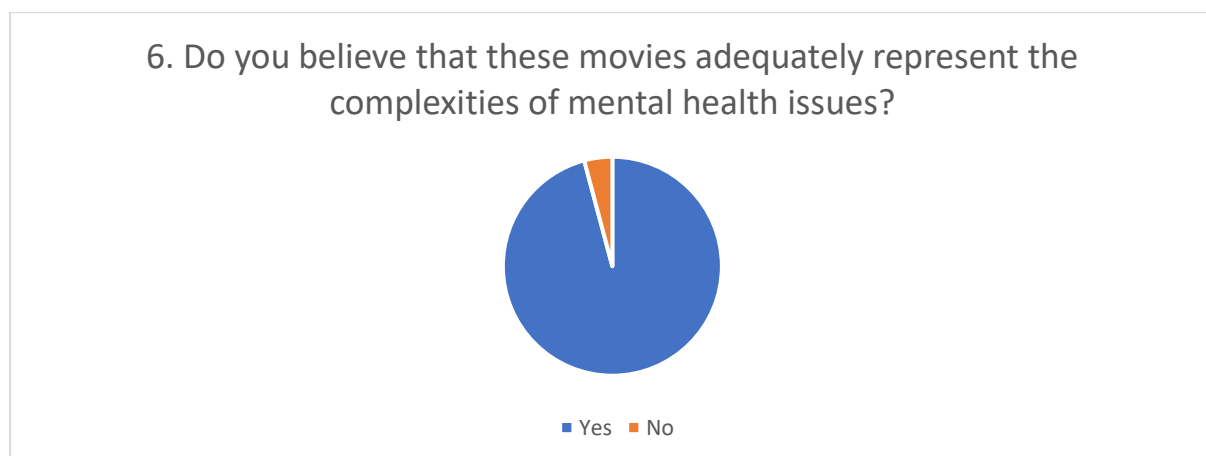
It's interesting to note, though, that 11% of respondents had a different opinion and thought these films were mostly intended for amusement. They indicated that not all viewers may understand cinematic depictions of emotional health in the same way, and they urged that the depiction of issues in psychological well-being in such films should be viewed with a degree of scepticism. This disagreement

highlights how difficult it is to discuss mental health in movies because there is a large number of audience expectations and interpretations.



5. Discovery of the study revealed an astonishing finding: a whopping 94% of participants think that films like "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore" have had a significant positive influence on society. As per the respondents, their impact encompasses a significant decrease in the widespread stigma that has traditionally surrounded mental health issues. This overwhelming agreement shows that people generally acknowledge that these movies have done a great job of encouraging empathy and understanding while tearing down the stigma attached to mental health problems. The resounding consensus regarding these movies' beneficial effects emphasizes their potential to be change agents and support more realistic and empathetic representations of mental-health in the movies.

6. The conclusion of our questionnaire provides insight into the public's perception of how mental health is portrayed in "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore." A resounding 74% of participants said they thought these films did a good job of capturing the complexity of mental health concerns. This substantial majority implies that the films have been successful in connecting with viewers and correctly and emotionally depicting mental health.

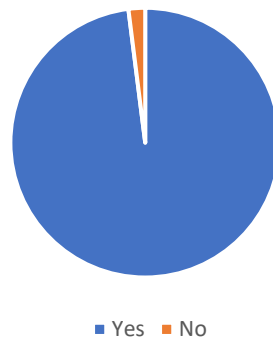


This precise understanding emphasizes how Indian film can be an effective tool for raising mental health awareness. It means that films can help close the gap between the complicated realities of mental and emotional health issues and the views held by society when they are treated sensitively and



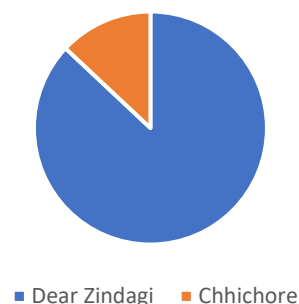
authentically. This finding highlights the cinematic potential to help reduce stigma and promote a more empathetic and informed understanding of mental health issues in the circumstances of research on "Beyond Bollywood: A Critical exploration of Mental Health Awareness in 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore' ."

### 7. Would you recommend these movies as a means of raising mental health awareness to others?



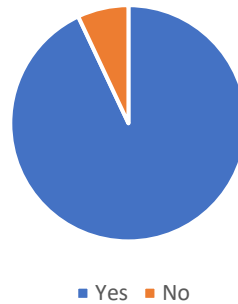
7. According to the conclusions from our study, a large proportion of survey respondents—98%—said they would be inclined to suggest these films as useful methods of promoting mental and emotional health awareness. The participants' massive backing for cinematic tales, like those in "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," recommends that these works in the power to positively influence public perceptions of mental health. It emphasizes how important it is for these movies to promote candid discussions and a greater awareness of mental health concerns in society.

### 8. Which movie, 'Dear Zindagi' or 'Chhichhore,' do you believe portrays mental health issues more accurately?



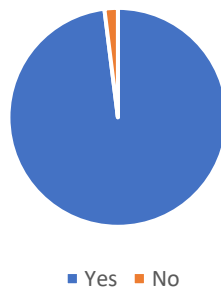
8. During this discovery, the importance indicates the difference in the two films' perceived reviews lies in the results of the survey. A minuscule but noteworthy 13% of respondents think that 'Chhichhore' represents mental health challenges more properly than 'Dear Zindagi,' with an overwhelming 87% of respondents believing that 'Dear Zindagi' does. This discrepancy in understanding highlights the unique influence and potency of these cinematic tales in tackling and connecting with the intricacies of mental health, illuminating the various ways that Indian film increases mental health consciousness.

9. Have you personally experienced a change in your perception of mental health after watching 'Dear Zindagi' or 'Chhichhore'?



9. The study we conducted on 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore' reveals an interesting finding in the survey results: 93% of the participants experienced a personal shift in their understanding of mental health as a result of watching these movies. The majority was positively impacted by these cinematic storylines, which increased knowledge and comprehension of mental health issues. Nonetheless, a small but significant 7% of respondents continued to be uncertain, which is credited to subject's intricacy and the range of reactions it might elicit. This research emphasizes how effective movies can be in changing people's attitudes and eradicating the stigma associated with mental illness.

10. What resources can be recommended for mental health, such as toll-free helpline numbers or support groups, highlighted in both movies?



10. Discovery from the survey were highly informative in our study on the subject of "A Comparative Analysis of the Films 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore' on Mental Health Awareness." A resounding 98% of participants pointed out that neither of the two movies had enough mental health resources, like support groups or toll-free hotlines. This reflects the difficulties people face while trying to get mental health care. Notably, among the important resources mentioned by our respondents were instances such as the 13-language, 24/7, toll-free Kiran (1800-599-0019) for mental health awareness and rehabilitation helpline. These findings shows important it is to depict mental health in movies authentically and sympathetically because doing so might increase awareness and possibly even inspire the growth of an important support network.



## Conclusion

It is rare to overstate the ability of movies to throw light on these overlooked aspects of our collective awareness in a society where discussions about mental health are frequently cloaked in stigma and secrecy. We set out on a cinematic trip via the lenses of "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," attempting to solve the puzzles surrounding mental health awareness in Indian society.

This study is driven by a multi-pronged attempt to investigate how Indian cinema, particularly these two provocative films, has shaped society's perception of mental health. By collecting the many answers from participants, we gained an important meaning of the complex relationship between the human psyche and film narrative.

It began by creating an age-neutral questionnaire and asking people from all backgrounds to contribute their opinions on these cinematic stories. The questions were positioned at the interface of emotion and intellect, asking about experiences that respondent had in mental health, both in terms of their travels through the fictional worlds and the lasting effects those experiences had on them.

Our cinematic journey aimed to determine whether these movies corresponded with the actual life realities of people facing mental and emotional wellness issues. Did the challenges they faced find validation on the big screen, bringing a sense of unity and mutual understanding? The responses, heartfelt and illuminating, revealed the elaborate relationships occurring between reality and celluloid. Possibly its most significant effort was my attempt to quantify the effects of the shift in public opinion has the compelling narratives of 'Dear Zindagi' and 'Chhichhore' made people more receptive, understanding, and inclined to engage in talks on their mental health?

This study's outcome is that film can be an empowering instrument when used authentically and sensitively. When it comes to guiding us toward a place of increased acceptance, empathy, and understanding, the screen—which is sometimes thought of as just a mirror to our reality—can act as a torchbearer.

As the research comes to an end, Let's look forward to what lies ahead with optimism. Our research's conclusions not only inform filmmakers but also give them the confidence to create stories that authentically depict the real-life, human experiences of mental health. Through this approach, they can offer assistance to create a society in which stigma fades and a more hopeful, enlightened future dawns. With movies like "Dear Zindagi" and "Chhichhore," Indian cinema serves as a lighthouse, driving Bollywood toward greater intelligence, raising awareness of mental health issues, and establishing a community that embraces the complexities of human Mental Health and its awareness.

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